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ABSTRACT

The kinds of destructive acts that take place on college campuses, the circumstances under which different behaviors occur, and the norms governing current students' attitudes toward destructiveness were studied. Data were collected in 1980 and 1981 through administration of two questionnaires to a national sample of undergraduates. Responses to the first, open-ended questionnaire were received from 523 students from 6 colleges, while 760 students from 4 colleges responded to the second, more structured questionnaire. In general, the results suggest that campus destructiveness is a nationwide phenomenon, affecting colleges and universities of all types and sizes. The overwhelming student attitude was one of disapproval of all types of destructive behavior, including less serious infractions. Students also seemed to favor fairly punitive measures in dealing with known offenders. Possible reasons for the prevalence of campus destructiveness, characteristics of student offenders, and possible approaches to lessening this problem are addressed, and a substantial literature review on destructiveness in general and elementary and secondary school-directed destructiveness is included. The questionnaires are appended. (SW)

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Campus Destructiveness in the 1980's:

.. Survey of American College Students

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INTRODUCTION

The 1970's were a relatively peaceful period for college campuses when compared with the previous decade of campus violence and destruction. This may account for the little attention given to the wide range of persistent but less dramatic destructiveness that exists on college campuses today. Such behavior is quite different from the destructiveness which occurred in accordance with the student movement (both in the nature of the acts and the motives behind them). The increasing prevalence of seemingly nonpolitical destructiveness on college campuses across the country renders it a subject requiring much further investigation. Included here are such behaviors as campus vandalism and theft, verbal and physical harassment of students (including sexual exploitation and rape), and various acts of academic dishonesty.

When destructive behaviors are pervasive on college campuses, they interfere with the express purposes and daily functioning of institutions, contribute to students' feelings of alienation and frustration and provide an atmosphere less than conducive to intellectual development and personal growth. In addition, college student destructiveness often takes the form of vandalism and theft of campus property, thereby costing thousands of dollars a year during a period when colleges' expenses are relatively high, and their levels of support are relatively low.

The intent of this preliminary study was to learn about the kinds of destructive acts that take place on college campuses, the circumstances under which different behaviors occur, and the norms governing current students' attitudes toward

destructiveness. By contributing to our understanding of the causes of campus destructiveness, the study aims at enhancing our ability to develop intervention measures and provides some illumination in the complex areas of student morality and responsibility.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Social-Psychological Explanations of Destructiveness

In their attempts to account for and interpret destructive behaviors committed by young people, social scientists (particularly criminologists) traditionally have relied on subcultural explanations, most often identified with studies of gangs and other juvenile groups (e.g. for review see Gibbons, 1979: 93-111; Taylor et al., 1973: 133-138). Destructiveness is described as spontaneous "negativistic" behavior arising from collective group dynamics and identifications. Explanations for such behaviors range from theories about young people committing destructive acts in order to gain status in the eyes of their peers (Cohen, 1955) to instrumental explanations of theft as a way of attaining success (in material terms) when legitimate means of doing so are not available (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). Other explanations have emphasized the role of "value orientations" in accounting for delinquency; for example Matza and Sykes (1961) have emphasized the similarities between the hedonistic values of delinquents and the conventional middle class.

Many of these explanations may have limited relevance within the college context, however. For the most part they focus on

working-class or lower-class males of high-school age or younger. Participation occurs within socially integrated groups which are, to a greater or lesser extent, at odds with the larger social environment. College students, by comparison, are older, generally have higher social status (or aspire to it), and tend to be relatively well-socialized individuals who have met with some degree of conventional success, at least with respect to academic achievement. The cultural explanations associated with delinquent subgroups seem far removed from their experiences.

Interest in delinquent gangs has waned drastically during the last decade (Gibbons, 1979: 108), as criminologists have turned their attentions toward other interests. Investigators concerned with property offenses and other kinds of deviance more recently have focused on recognizing and interpreting the diversity of meanings that deviant and illegal acts have for people committing them, and particularly the social definitions assigned to various acts and offenders (e.g. see Becker, 1963: 9 for the now classic statement of this position). In other words, individuals are not deviants until they are labelled as such; delinquency then, is a product of social judgment. In this tradition, Cohen (1973) has defined the conditions under which illegal property destruction has been labelled as institutionalized rule-breaking, ideological conflict or "conventional" vandalism. Applications of each of these destructiveness categories within the college context follow.

Historically, violence has long characterized college campuses (Gilles, 1974; Skolnik, 1969), but such behaviors have

not always been defined as problematic. Even today, certain types of destructiveness are seen as legitimate expressions of student culture. Destruction associated with collective or fraternal rituals and sporting events are perhaps the best examples of institutionalized destructiveness within the college context.

The majority of the research on violence and destruction on the college campus however, has interpreted destructive behaviors by college students as a form of political expression. Conducted during the student movement of the 1960's, studies of this type have defined destructiveness as a means of demonstrating ideological commitment and meeting certain political ends. Discussions center around the legitimate and illegitimate uses of violence, as well as the organization of political strategies based on behaviors traditionally considered delinquent (e.g. see Skolnik, 1969; Flacks, 1967; 1971). The distinction between political and delinquent destructiveness is not always a particularly clear-cut one, however (Horowitz and Liebowitz, 1968; Cohen, 1971), and the imputation of ideological motives to college student property offenders should be undertaken quite cautiously, particularly during the present period of relative political quietude. Carefully done studies of political vandalism in other contexts (e.g. Taylor and Walton's 1971 study of industrial sabotage) have suggested that even destructive acts that appear to be quite similar may have highly differentiated and subtle meanings attached to them. They cannot be interpreted apart from the motives and conceptions of individual actors.

The remaining interpretation assigned to acts of destructiveness, labelling them as conventional or criminal property offenses, is perhaps the most common and most popular way of explaining these behaviors. Cohen (1973: 41-48) has outlined five types of "conventional vandalism" based on the different meanings and motives attributed to the act by offenders themselves. His typology refers specifically to vandalism, but may have relevance for other types of offenses as well. He identifies: (1) acquisitive acts, where the primary motive is to acquire money or property; (2) tactical acts, where destruction is defined as a deliberate and planned tactic used to advance some end (such action may result from ideological commitment or may be used to draw attention to more personal troubles with more or less explicitly defined practical outcomes); (3) vindictive acts, defined as emotionally satisfying, relatively "safe" forms of revenge against specific persons or groups; (4) destructive play, often motivated by curiosity and thrill-seeking, (the spirit of competition, skill and risk-taking are important here); and (5) malicious acts, including a variety of provocative and reactive behaviors and implying not only hatred, anger and aggression but enjoyment of the act for its own sake. The extent to which each of these types of destructiveness appears within the college context has yet to be demonstrated.

Factors Associated with Destructiveness

General studies of the personal characteristics of juvenile offenders have indicated that offenders are predominantly males,

but there is some evidence of an increasing amount of participation among females, particularly with respect to property offenses (Simon, 1975). There is a definite relationship between type of destructiveness and age (minor acts against property tend to peak in late adolescence) and most research suggests a persistent trend toward group, rather than individual, participation (Cohen, 1973:50)..

Psychological studies of offenders have revealed a lack of homogeneity with respect to "personality type" but tend to associate destructiveness and other violent behaviors with emotional disorders, social adjustment problems, feelings of frustration and alienation, and personal failures (for review see Savitz and Johnston, 1978:Section VI). Frequent attempts have been made to link such psychological problems, and their behavioral manifestations, to various social structures, most notably the family and the economic system. Explanations tend to rest on deficiencies within these structures; the effects of broken homes and theories of inadequate socialization most often characterize family explanations, while the direct consequences of poverty and unemployment are the most common themes within economic interpretations. Sykes (1980:19-35) has reviewed theories of "crime causation" and has found that in spite of their persistence and popularity, evidence about the role of family variables and economic factors in influencing deviant behavior remains, at best, inconclusive.

Other environmental variables have also been related to

incidence of destructiveness. At the most specific level, researchers within this tradition have focused on the physical characteristics of buildings and neighborhoods, such as architectural design, general maintenance and other aesthetic qualities (e.g. see Ward, 1973). The purpose here generally has not been to establish direct causality, but rather to demonstrate the importance of certain physical features in facilitating acts of violence and destruction. Perhaps most notable among the environmental explanations are the ecological studies of crime (for review see Wilks, 1967:138-156) which relate rates of various criminal behaviors to spatial distributions within the environment. In general, the findings have suggested links between type of crime and region of the country, the quality of urban life, and specific characteristics of neighborhoods, such as overcrowding and zoning patterns (e.g. placement of commercial/industrial/residential areas).

The larger social and cultural environment has also been cited as contributing to the problem of destructiveness. The American culture in general can be described as having an historical and continuing tradition of violence, dominance and aggression (Schur, 1969; Sykes, 1980). Such behaviors are glamorized even further within the media. The increased anonymity of American life and the widening of social cleavages along age, class and racial lines are coupled with widespread perceptions of profound shifts in values and institutional attachments (Wilson, 1977; Sykes, 1980). Destructive modes of expression are further encouraged by the availability of weapons and

drugs, and the increasing number of situations where such expressions are tolerated, accepted and expected (Ban and Ciminillo, 1977:ch.1).[1] The notion that violence and destructiveness develop out of a commitment to American values rather than a rejection of them may be particularly relevant for understanding middle class participation in destructive behaviors.

In evaluating the impact of these environmental variables however, we must remember that it is the individual's perception of the environment that gives meaning to the environment. When people commit acts of destructiveness, their behavior is dependent on their own conception of the situation or environment. Even in cases of extreme sensory deprivation, subjective interpretations of the deprived conditions are the most powerful predictors of action (e.g. see Orne, 1964). Environmental conditions themselves do not cause certain modes of expression, but rather must be interpreted in terms of individuals' perceptions of them. Although such observations are frequently made (e.g. see Wrong, 1961; Berger and Luckman, 1968), actual interactive approaches, analyzing contexts in relation to the meanings that the individuals involved assign to them, seldom appear.

Studies of Destructiveness in Elementary and Secondary Schools

The increasing incidence of violence and destruction at the elementary and secondary school levels, including the upsurge

[1] According to some reports, violent crime in this country has increased as much as 59% in the last decade (N.Y. Times, March 6, 1981, p. 16A).

in participation by middle-class adolescents, (perhaps first noted by Vaz, 1967), has resulted in an interest in destructiveness within the field of education. Conducted primarily by and for educators and school administrators, studies of school-based crime and violence began appearing in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Given this relatively recent appearance, a substantial number of academic studies and government hearings have been conducted in response to this ever-growing problem (for comprehensive bibliography see National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, 1979). While the vast majority of this research has focused on public education at the high school level, some studies delineate variables which may be useful within the college context. A brief summary of the concerns and findings of studies of this type is presented here.

Most of the studies attempt to outline practical procedures for destructiveness reduction and prevention. Since public school administrators cannot determine the characteristics of their student bodies or change the location of their schools, the bulk of the research has focused on factors that can be changed, namely, the social climate and policies of the schools themselves. Discussions range from examinations of the physical appearance of schools and facility/grounds maintenance (e.g. Allen and Greenberg, 1978; Pablant and Baxter, 1975) to investigations of the relations between destructiveness and schools' visibility and accessibility (e.g. Vestermark and Blauvelt, 1978; Pablant and Baxter, 1975) to very specific reviews of the effectiveness of various security systems (e.g.

Abramson, 1977; Ban and Ciminillo, 1977:Ch.2; Walker, 1976; U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1975). While such concerns seem to have direct relevance for explaining differential rates of destructiveness across colleges as well as high schools, or in recognizing factors which may facilitate certain types of destructiveness, they seem to offer little direct insight into the reasons individuals engage in such behaviors in the first place.

In a second type of study, students' perceptions of the relevance of curricular contents have been related to their feelings of alienation, boredom and frustration; such feelings are thought to contribute directly to violent modes of expression. Some selected evidence for this assumption is provided by a study of New York City's vocational schools. These comparatively safe, destructive-free environments strongly suggest the positive impact of goal-directed education (Safe Schools Act, 1973:80). As the value of a college education as a guarantee of successful participation within the occupational marketplace continues to decrease, college students' perceptions of the relevance of the college curriculum may become an increasingly important factor in their self-conceptions and general feelings of satisfaction.

A third set of concerns involves relating characteristics of the school experience and the climate of individual schools to incidence of destructiveness. The most frequently conducted studies of this type tend to be in-depth examinations of school policies, particularly systems of discipline maintenance and

school governance (e.g. see U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1978; Ban and Ciminillo, 1977:Ch.3). Important variables examined within this context include school rules about conduct and attendance, types of disciplinary action, the quality of student-teacher and parent-teacher relations, and the degree of community, parent and student input into school policies and decision-making processes. The assumption here is that improving the social climate of the classroom and the quality of interpersonal interactions within schools, will result in improved learning processes and decreases in destructiveness (Gold, 1978; Howell and Grahlman, 1977; Carlton, 1977). While different investigators have reached different conclusions about the desirable balance between school control and student autonomy, many studies have pointed to the value of programs which increase students' awareness of the problems of destructiveness and directly enlist students' aid in destructiveness prevention and adjudication (e.g. see Beatty, 1977; Goldstein, 1977; Thomas, 1976; Dececco and Richards, 1974).

THE PRESENT STUDY

While adolescent destructiveness and school crime have been studied extensively in the last decade, similar behaviors within institutions of higher education have not been subjected to systematic study. The present study was an attempt to determine the extent of and potential for destructive behaviors on college and university campuses across the country and to identify personal and situational factors associated with college student destructiveness. This investigation took the form of a two-stage, nationwide survey of college students.

Given the increasing prevalence of seemingly nonpolitical destructiveness on college campuses, and the expected relevance of certain factors associated with secondary school violence and vandalism, we expected to find:

(1) a broad-based student acceptance of certain types of destructiveness, particularly those directed against the institution rather than individual students

(2) substantial variation in students' attitudes toward destructiveness and the frequency of destructive behaviors across institutions; in general, less destructiveness seems likely at smaller, private institutions and at schools where students' evaluations of the academic and social climate, as well as the physical environment, are positive.

(3) extensive differences between student offenders and non-offenders; in terms of personal characteristics, the majority of students who admit to committing acts of destructiveness are expected to be male, lower division students with lower GPA's and non-science majors. In addition, student offenders

are expected to be less satisfied than other students with their college experiences, both on an academic and interpersonal level.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected in 1980 and 1981 by means of two cross-sectional written questionnaires (See Appendix A) distributed to a sample of undergraduates in classrooms and on-campus residences at various institutions across the country. The first questionnaire was largely exploratory, containing many open-ended items. Five hundred twenty-three students from six colleges and universities responded to this preliminary investigation. Response rates at different institutions varied,[2] but overall the response rate was about 62%.

This first questionnaire asked students about their attitudes toward various behaviors and the responses they felt were appropriate for students caught engaging in each. In addition, students were asked to list destructive behaviors they had been a victim of or in which they themselves had engaged while at college, including the reasons and circumstances surrounding each incident. Another open-ended question asked more generally why they felt students committed acts against property and acts against persons; a final open-ended question inquired about what they thought could be done to lessen destructiveness at their school. Various personal characteristics and evaluations of their

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2 The response rate tended to vary with type of distribution employed. In general, in-class distribution procedures yielded higher response rates than residence hall distribution. Response rates from individual schools range from 29% to 88%.

school environment were tapped by means of the more traditional closed-ended questions.

The second questionnaire, constructed out of the knowledge gained in the preliminary inquiry, was more structured in form. Since the results from the first survey overwhelmingly suggested that resident students were much more exposed to and involved in destructive behaviors, the second questionnaire was distributed only to resident students. Four colleges and universities participated in this second-wave study. Seven hundred sixty students completed and returned the questionnaire; the response rates were quite comparable across institutions and overall averaged an 86% rate of return.

The second questionnaire dealt with the same issues as the first, but asked students to rate the frequency of specific destructive acts within the last two years, and indicate in which they had been personally involved (as perpetrator and/or victim). Behaviors included were various kinds of theft and vandalism, physical and verbal attack, sexual exploitation, rape and several kinds of academic dishonesty. Students also were asked to provide specific information about when and where destructiveness occurred, what kinds of students they thought were responsible for much of the destructiveness at their school, and why students they know commit acts of destructiveness. Additionally, students reported how much they thought various activities would help to decrease the amount of destructive behavior at their school. Lists of personal and environmental characteristics, parallel to those in the first questionnaire, were also included.

The Sample

Taken together, the data collected in the two waves of the study provide information from over 1200 students at eight different institutions. The participating colleges and universities constitute a diverse group, varying greatly on such variables as size, location, academic emphasis, source of funding, and academic selectivity. Table 1 summarizes some of the major characteristics of the institutions participating in the study.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participating Institutions(N=8)

Full-time Undergraduate Enrollment

less than 2,000	2,000-5,000	5,000-10,000	10,000-20,000	more than 20,000
2	1	1	2	2

Type of Institution

four-year liberal arts college	four-year university
2	6

Source of Funding

Public	Private
4	4

Regional Location

Northeast	Midwest	South	West
2	2	1	3

Demographic Location

metropolitan area	large city	suburb	small city
2	1	2	3

Academic Selectivity *

low	medium	high	very high
3**	0	4	1

* based on 1980 ACE/UCLA national norms selectivity measures (Astin et al.1980)
** Selectivity ratings for 2 of the schools in this category were not computed by Astin et al., but were estimated from mean SAT verbal plus math scores of entering freshmen.

The combined sample is 50% female, 50% male, and contains fairly equivalent percentages of students from all four college classes (31% freshman; 27% sophomore; 23% junior; 19% senior). With respect to academic major, representativeness is somewhat more difficult to determine, given the differences in academic offerings at the different institutions. The distribution of students on academic major is certainly diffuse. With the exception of social and behavioral science majors, who account for about one-quarter of the reported majors of students in the sample and are perhaps slightly overrepresented, no general academic major is reported by more than 10% of the students in the sample. A wide range of grade point averages, collected only in the first-wave survey, also were reported; 15% of reported grades fell below 2.5, 24% of the reported grades fell between 2.5 and 2.9, 40% between 3.0 and 3.49, and 21% were 3.5 or higher.

THE FINDINGS

Students' Attitudes Toward Destructiveness

One of the principal purposes of the initial inquiry was to gather current information about the norms governing student behavior, and in particular to learn what kinds of destructiveness were approved of and disapproved of by present-day college students. Contrary to our original expectations, students' responses to this first survey clearly demonstrated an overwhelming disapproval of destructive behaviors. As reported in Table 2, the majority of students (generally over 85%) expressed their disapproval of destructiveness of all types, even relatively minor acts such as graffiti and inconsiderateness.

Table 2. Students' Attitudes Toward Various Destructive Behaviors

	% Strongly Approve	% Approve	% Neutral	% Disapprove	% Strongly Disapprove	N
estruction of campus property	1	1	2	24	73	517
estruction of students' property	0	0	1	11	88	516
raffiti	1	2	22	48	27	513
tealing campus property ($50+).....	0	1	5	25	69	516
tealing campus property ($50-).....	0	2	10	39	49	510
tealing from students....	0	0	1	7	91	512
erbal harassment of students.....	2	1	15	51	31	516
hysical harassment of students.....	0	1	2	19	78	517
nconsiderateness.....	1	1	6	59	44	515
exual exploitation.....	3	1	9	31	56	508
ape.....	0	-	1	2	96	515
cademic sabotage.....	1	1	0	15	83	515
cademic cheating.....	1	1	9	32	57	510

In addition, our original formulations included expectations of substantial variation in the level of approval accorded to different behaviors. For example, we expected to find more approval of acts directed against the institution than acts directed against other students. While some slight tendency in this direction did appear within the data, the differences between the percentages of students expressing disapproval of each type of behavior were not nearly as substantial as was expected. Even academic dishonesty, which seemed likely to be a more accepted deviant form within the student culture, met with widespread disapproval.

While students disapproved of most of the destructive behaviors listed on the questionnaire, more differentiation between different types of destructive behaviors is evident when considering the responses students thought were appropriate for fellow students caught committing these acts a second time or more often (see Tables 3A & B). In general responses tended to be fairly punitive, even among students who admitted to committing these behaviors themselves.[3] Students were especially likely to recommend strict penalties for acts of theft, destructiveness, and physical harassment of students. A wide range of penalties were prescribed for students caught engaging in acts of academic dishonesty.

There were no gender differences in the reporting of penalties felt to be appropriate for acts against property or academic dishonesty. However, in responding to acts against persons, women were likely to favor the stricter punishments somewhat more often than men were. Some significant differences by school attended appeared on the penalty items, but no general pattern to these differences could be discerned. In general, students' attitudes toward destructiveness were more punitive than we expected. Even if we interpret such findings as being motivated by respondents' desires to answer in ways they felt were socially approved, these perceptions themselves appear to be more strict than we had expected.

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3 Only those students who listed three or more behaviors in which they personally had participated tended to be somewhat less punitive.

Figures are Percentage

Table 3A. Student Suggestions for Appropriate Responses to Destructiveness

	No Penalty	Verbal Reprimand	Restitu-- tion	Monetary Fine	Suspend	Expel	Arrest	N
Destruction of campus property	1	1	33	35	12	5	13	518
Destruction of students' property	1	0	33	32	15	4	15	518
Graffiti	6	13	48	24	5	1	3	512
Stealing campus property ($50+)	1	3	11	29	17	8	31	513
Stealing campus property ($50-)	3	7	19	37	17	7	10	512
Stealing students' property	1	1	13	20	22	10	33	507
Verbal harass-ment of students	12	65	7	3	9	2	2	506
Physical harass-ment of students	2	15	16	10	32	9	16	510
Incon-siderate-ness	9	65	11	6	7	1	1	504
Sexual exploita-tion	11	31	9	6	20	10	13	487
Rape	1	1	0	1	2	2	93	515

Figures are Percentages

Table 3B. Student Suggestions for Responses to Destructiveness

	No Penalty	Redo Work	Lower Grade	Fail Course	Suspend	Expel	N
Academic sabotage	1	9	17	30	23	20	511
Cheating	4	10	22	34	17	13	508

Given the consistency of students' responses to the attitude items, including the lack of meaningful significant differences between the responses of students attending different institutions, students were not re-surveyed about their attitudes toward destructiveness in the second-stage questionnaire. A single item, asking students to sum up their general feelings about how to deal with students who are caught committing serious destructive acts, was included. Responses to this item confirmed our initial findings; 65% of the students thought that those committing destructive acts should be required to make restitution for their behavior, 29% thought that destructiveness should be punished (i.e. students caught should be suspended, expelled or arrested), while only 6% thought that student offenders should be advised to seek out some kind of counseling or therapy. Males and females responded quite similarly to this item. But while the majority of students from each institution favored restitution for serious destructiveness, students from public universities were more likely to recommend that offenders be punished for their actions than students from private, four-year colleges. Thirty-nine percent of the public university students favored punishment, compared to 20 % of the private college students.

The Pervasiveness of Destructiveness

The problem of campus destructiveness is indeed a widespread one, as over 50% of the students in the combined sample reported that they had been the victim of some type of destructive behavior while at college. While many of the acts listed were relatively minor infractions such as verbal abuse among students and various acts of student inconsiderateness, over one-third of the complaints involved theft of students' personal property. About half of the students reporting this behavior said that they had been victimized by theft more than once. Another 10% of the reported acts involved the destruction of students' property.

The vast majority of known acts of destructiveness committed on college campuses are acts against property. Burglary, petty larceny, and "criminal mischief", most often vandalism, alone account for about 70% of all offenses reported to campus officials, according to the activity reports provided by campus administrators at four of the universities in the sample.[4] However, reports of institutional theft and destruction of campus property together accounted for less than 5% of all destructiveness reported by students. Perhaps students do not often consider acts against campus property as having directly affected them, even though they seem likely to be at least indirectly inconvenienced by such acts.

With respect to academic dishonesty, 10% of the destructive behaviors reported fall into the category of academic dishonesty.

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4 In addition to the student questionnaires, we also collected information about the nature and prevalence of destructive behavior on their campuses directly from administrators in four institutions.

The interpretation here may parallel the one proposed in accordance with the low figures corresponding to acts against institutional property; that is, the percentage may not accurately represent the amount of cheating in the population, but rather the percentage of students who felt that they had been personally affected by such behaviors.

In general, students from different institutions were quite similar in their reports about the kind of destructiveness affecting them personally. Scattered differences by school do appear[5], but the data are not consistently patterned enough to allow for the identification of general trends. However, students from different institutions did judge the seriousness of the destructiveness problem at their own school significantly differently. Fifty-six percent of the students from public universities reported that destructiveness was a serious problem at their school, compared to only 19% of the students attending private four-year colleges.

This finding is further substantiated by comparing the percentage of students from public and private institutions who report that they have personal knowledge of specific destructive acts being committed at their school (see Table 4).[6] Students attending public institutions report significantly more destructive behavior of all types than students attending private colleges. In most instances at least twice as many public university students as private college students report that each type of destructive act occurs frequently at their

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5 For example, students at one school were far less likely to report theft or destruction of their personal property; academic dishonesty was reported less often at another school.

6 This question was asked only in the second-wave questionnaire.

Table 4. Percentage of Students Reporting Personal Knowledge of Destructive Behaviors by Type of School (public university N=355; private college N=402)

	yes frequently		yes occasionally		no	
	public	private	public	private	public	private
Destruction of campus property.....	36	18	48	62	16	20
Destruction of students' property....	19	7	49	43	32	50
Graffiti.....	45	22	37	51	17	27
Stealing campus property ($50+).....	19	4	49	46	32	50
Stealing campus property ($50-).....	36	21	43	54	21	25
Stealing from students..	31	9	49	62	20	29
Verbal abuse of students	38	19	45	52	17	29
Physical attacks on students.....	11	2	43	43	46	55
Inconsiderateness.....	40	27	48	58	13	15
Sexual Exploitation.....	21	13	39	36	40	51
Rape.....	9	2	37	27	54	71
Academic sabotage.....	10	1	24	18	65	81
Academic cheating.....	32	7	48	49	20	44

school.[7]

Differences in students' perceptions of the frequency or seriousness of destructiveness however, are not related to students' evaluations of their college experiences or campus environments. Students were asked to evaluate their schools on a number of dimensions including the quality of their academic and social experiences, the availability of support from others on campus, and the comfort and safety of the physical environment. Students from different schools characterized their institutions very differently; statistically significant differences in response patterns appear on each of the

[7] The public/private distinction for institutions in this portion of the sample is somewhat compounded by size. The public universities included here have undergraduate enrollments of over 10,000 students, while the private colleges have undergraduate enrollments of less than 2,000 students.

evaluation questions when school of attendance is held constant. But these differences had no relationship to how students answered the destructiveness questions. Those schools rated positively on other dimensions were as likely to have high levels of reported destructiveness as those receiving generally lower ratings from their students on the other scales.

In general then, our second hypothesis was only partially supported. Students at smaller, private institutions did report somewhat less destructive behavior than students at other kinds of schools, but this relationship was independent of students' evaluations of their schools and the nature of their college experiences.

Circumstances Surrounding Campus Destructiveness

When students were asked to report about the details relevant to acts of campus destructiveness known to them, certain consistencies in the responses of students from all of the institutions in the sample were apparent. Students' responses suggest that acts of destructiveness are especially likely to occur on weekends and in the evening, particularly after midnight; the most common place for destructiveness to occur seems to be within residence halls, although at certain schools the student union and classroom buildings were frequent sites as well. Most students felt that destructiveness took place throughout the entire school term, but at some schools sports events and other campus activities seemed to precipitate destructiveness.

When asked about who was responsible for the destructive behaviors occurring at their school, students from different institutions again answered similarly. The majority of students

attributed such acts to male students and residence hall students. In addition, most students thought that destructiveness was most often group behavior and that often participating students were under the influence of alcohol or drugs (72% and 81% respectively reported each of these factors as relevant). At schools having Greek societies, fraternity and sorority members were often mentioned among those regularly participating in destructiveness. At several schools, destructiveness was thought to be perpetrated by people who were not college students.

In speculating about why students commit acts of destructiveness, the most frequently selected responses included: they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs (chosen by 73% of the students); they think it is fun (63%) and they are immature (62%). Similarly, when describing the reasons and circumstances important in their own admitted acts of destructiveness, students often reported their motivations in terms of "fun" or attempts to alleviate boredom. Additionally, many students mentioned feeling peer pressures to participate and noted the influence that alcohol or drugs had on their behavior (which students frequently seem to interpret as absolving them from responsibility for their actions). The venting of anger about a specific unpleasant or injurious event and acts of revenge were also fairly frequent "justifications"; more generalized feelings of frustration and aggression were associated with destructiveness far less often, with the exception of frustration resulting from academic pressures most often mentioned in conjunction with cheating on exams. A final trend was for students to see their own destructive behavior as the exception, that is, resulting from a very special set of "extenuating circumstances". This most often

seems to be true in cases where destructiveness occurred as a result of alleged thoughtlessness, e.g. cigarette burns on rugs or furniture, improper use of campus facilities. Personal gain, self-defense, and attempts to strike out or back at the institution were given as personal motivations far less often than was expected.

Student Offenders

By separating those students who admitted to committing more serious acts of destructiveness (here defined as several types of theft and vandalism, physical attacks and rape) from the rest of the students in the sample, we hoped to more clearly identify a set of personal and environmental factors associated with campus destructiveness. This attempt was, for the most part, unsuccessful. The eighty-six identified student offenders were not significantly different from student nonoffenders on most of the variables under consideration.[8] Student offenders were not significantly different from other students in terms of their academic majors or grade point averages, and breakdowns by college class indicate quite equivalent distributions. (Lower division students are routinely attributed with disproportional participation in campus destructiveness. These data offer no support for this notion.) Offenders are somewhat more likely to be male than female (73% are male, 27% are female) but the correlation between gender and the variable defining participation in serious destructiveness is quite low (r=.15).

Students from different institutions were not disproportionately represented among the student offenders. Neither were students evaluations of their college experiences particularly useful for distinguishing between offenders and non offenders. We originally expected that students with more negative perceptions of their

8 Only second-wave data were included in this comparative analysis.

college environments would be more likely to commit destructive acts within it. However, the data clearly support a rejection of this hypothesis. Student offenders and nonoffenders were not significantly different from one another on a single item of this type.

Responses to Campus Destructiveness

In reporting their own responses to destructiveness, 43% of the students in the sample said that they had been involved personally in trying to stop destructive acts, while 57% had not. When students in the latter category were asked why they had not responded, most reported that they had never been in a position to do anything, as they had not been present while such an act was taking place. When asked hypothetically what they thought their reaction would be if they saw someone engaging in destructive behavior, the most common response (given by 51% of the students) was that they would personally try to get the offender to stop by talking with him or her. Thirty-seven percent of the students thought they would report the offender to campus authorities, while 46% said they would report only the act to authorities. Only 10% of the students thought they would "do nothing" if they saw a destructive act in progress.

When asked how much they thought certain activities may help decrease destructiveness at their school, most of the listed suggestions were endorsed by between 40% and 50% of the students. The most strongly endorsed item was one suggesting more student involvement in preventing destructiveness (selected by 67% of the students). Other highly recommended activities included more or

better physical prevention measures (selected by 59% of the students) and more student activities and facilities on campus (selected by 51%). About 45% of the students recommended increased activity on the part of campus police and stronger enforcement of existing rules. Only slight differences by institution appeared.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In general, this investigation suggests that campus destructiveness is a nationwide phenomenon, affecting colleges and universities of all types and sizes. The institutions participating in the study are quite diverse, yet students from different schools seemed to be more similar than different in responding to questions about destructive behaviors on campus. The overwhelming student attitude was one of disapproval of all types of destructive behavior, including less serious infractions, suggesting that no broad base for student destructiveness seems to exist within the student culture. Furthermore, students seemed to favor fairly punitive measures in dealing with known offenders, and often advocated sanctions which are more strict than those proposed by many administrators.

In our attempts to understand the reasons for the prevalence of such negatively sanctioned behaviors, we are aided by the explanations given by students who have actually participated in destructive acts. These explanations were somewhat different than the hypothetical reasons provided by student nonoffenders and suggest that offenders often view property destruction as recreational (corresponding to Cohen's (1973) "destructive play" - cf. p. 5) and acts against persons as expressions of anger and revenge. Alcohol and drug use seem to play a major role in

destructive behavior of all types. Acquisitive, provocative, ideological and malicious acts of destructiveness were reported much less often, suggesting that the current situation does not arise from ideological conflict or psychological protest against the authority of the institution.

Student offenders were not different than nonoffenders on the personal and academic variables examined (e.g. year in school, academic major, grade point average) but males seem slightly more likely to be involved than females and resident students participate more often than commuters. Contrary to our original expectations, students' perceptions of many aspects of their campus environment had no relation to their tendency to engage in destructive behavior. Offenders were as likely to give positive evaluations of their college experiences as nonoffenders were. Further investigations into the "causes" of destructive behavior need not focus directly on the characteristics of the campus environment or even students' perceptions of it. The majority of students in any campus environment do not become involved in destructiveness. Rather, future investigations should perhaps focus more directly on the situational factors relevant at the time destructiveness occurs and perhaps explore in more detail the personal factors which differentiate student offenders from other students.

With respect to lessening campus destructiveness the findings suggest that many students favor student involvement in destructiveness prevention. Campus attempts to involve students need not focus on the negative consequences of such behaviors for the entire campus (of which students already seem to be aware), but rather on the negative consequences of student passivity toward destructiveness, the existing

widespread disapproval of such behavior within the general student body, and the responsibility of students to become actively involved in exerting group pressure against such activity.

Appendix A

(Distributed at 6 institutions in Spring of 1980 N=523)

Dear Student:

This questionnaire is being distributed at several colleges across the country. Your help is very much appreciated. The questionnaire is anonymous. All answers will be held in full confidence.

Joseph Katz — Roberta Leslie — David Tilley

Directors, Study of Quality of Campus Life

Please CIRCLE the number of your answer or, where appropriate, write your answer in the blank provided.

Gender: 1=female 2=male Age:_____

Class: 1=Freshman 2=Sophomore 3=Junior 4=Senior 5=other_____

Residence: 1=dormitory 2=fraternity/sorority house 3=at home with family 4=other off-campus

Major:_____ Grade-point average:_____

1. In regard to the list of behaviors below

A. What is your attitude toward each behavior?

B. What response do you think appropriate for students caught doing this behavior a second time or more often?

Please answer both A and B. List of Behaviors	A. attitude: strongly approve	approve	neutral	disapprove	strongly disapprove	B. response: no penalty	verbal reprimand	repair, restitution	monetary fine	suspension	expulsion	arrest by police
Acts affecting property												
a. destruction of campus property...	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. destruction of students' property	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. graffiti.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. taking of campus property worth over $50 (equipment, furniture)..	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. taking of campus property worth less than $50.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. stealing from other students.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. other_____	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Acts affecting persons												
h. verbal harassment of other students	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. physical harassment of other students, including their belongings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
j. being inconsiderate of other students' privacy, personal needs, etc.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
k. sexist comments, jokes, gestures.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
l. sexual exploitation.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
m. rape.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
n. other_____	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

List of Behaviors (continued)

Acts affecting academic work

	A. attitude: strongly approve	approve	neutral	disapprove	strongly disapprove	B. response: no penalty	redoing work	lowering grade	failing course	suspension	expulsion
o. sabotaging other students' work (spoiling lab experiments, taking reserve books).....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6
p. cheating on exams and papers.....	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6
q. other_____	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	6

2. While at college have you ever been a victim of or been personally affected by any of the above or other destructive behaviors? 1=yes 2=no
   a. If yes, please list which behaviors and indicate how many times you have been affected. 1=once 2=a few times 3=many times

Behavior	How many times?		
_____	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3
_____	1	2	3

3. Have you ever engaged in any of the above behaviors? 1=yes 2=no
   a. If yes, please list which behaviors and indicate why and under what circumstances you did so.

Behavior	Why and under what circumstances?
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. In general,
   a. Why do you think students commit acts against property?

_____

_____

b. Why do you think students commit acts against persons?

_____

_____

_____

5. On your campus, do you think acts of destructiveness against property are committed:
1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=usually 5=always

a. by only a few students..... 1 2 3 4 5
b. particularly by freshmen..... 1 2 3 4 5
c. by people who are not students..... 1 2 3 4 5
d. by males..... 1 2 3 4 5
e. by females..... 1 2 3 4 5
f. by people who act alone..... 1 2 3 4 5
g. by people in the company of others..... 1 2 3 4 5
h. under the influence of alcohol..... 1 2 3 4 5
i. under the influence of drugs.....1 2 3 4 5

6. How have <u>you</u> personally responded to students at your school who have committed destructive acts? Have you: 0=never 1=once 2=a few times 3=many times

a. stopped offenders yourself..... 0 1 2 3
b. reported offenders to campus officials..... 0 1 2 3
c. known offender but only reported act..... 0 1 2 3
d. remained indifferent unless you were personally affected. 0 1 2 3
e. done something else to guard against destructiveness..... 0 1 2 3
what?_____

7. How have the other students at your school reacted to acts of destructiveness?
Have they: 1=never 2=rarely 3=sometimes 4=usually 5=always

a. stopped offenders themselves..... 1 2 3 4 5
b. reported offenders to campus officials..... 1 2 3 4 5
c. known offenders but only reported acts..... 1 2 3 4 5
d. remained indifferent unless they were personally affected 1 2 3 4 5
e. done something else to guard against destructiveness..... 1 2 3 4 5
what?_____

8. On the whole, how effectively have the campus administration and other college offices been dealing with destructive acts?
Very effectively 1 2 3 4 5 Not effectively

9. What do you think <u>could be</u> done to lessen destructive behaviors at your school?

_____

_____

_____

10. To what extent do you think each of the following is present at your school?

	Very much 1	2	3	4	5 Not at all	9=no experience
a. stimulating courses	1	2	3	4	5	9
b. good academic counseling services	1	2	3	4	5	9
c. good psychological counseling services	1	2	3	4	5	9
d. severe academic competition	1	2	3	4	5	9
e. interesting things to do on campus	1	2	3	4	5	9
f. access to interesting activities off campus	1	2	3	4	5	9
g. good social relations among students	1	2	3	4	5	9
h. enforcement of rules about student behavior	1	2	3	4	5	9
i. an attractive physical environment	1	2	3	4	5	9
j. adequate safety features, such as lighting, locks, telephones	1	2	3	4	5	9
k. an effective campus police, insuring students' safety	1	2	3	4	5	9
l. other_____	1	2	3	4	5	9

11. How supportive have each of the following been to you?

	Very supportive 1	2	3	4	5 Not supportive at all	9=no experience
a. most of your professors	1	2	3	4	5	9
b. the university administration	1	2	3	4	5	9
c. your college friends	1	2	3	4	5	9
d. other students at your school	1	2	3	4	5	9
e. undergraduate resident assistants in the dorm	1	2	3	4	5	9
f. other dormitory staff	1	2	3	4	5	9
g. other_____	1	2	3	4	5	9

Thank you.

Feel free to make any other comments.

(Distributed at four institutions in Spring of 1981 N=760)

STUDY OF QUALITY OF CAMPUS LIFE

Dear Student,

This questionnaire arises from a concern about several different forms of destructiveness that are occurring on many college campuses across the nation. The purpose of the questionnaire is to gather information about what is happening and how students, faculty and administrators respond to destructiveness. The questionnaire is being given out to students in different parts of the country. On the basis of the information we will obtain we hope to reach a better understanding of what is going on and to find constructive and reasonable ways to serve both the personal needs of students and the needs of their institutions. The questionnaire is anonymous. We are very grateful to you for your help.

Joseph Katz Roberta Leslie David Tilley

Please CIRCLE the number of your answer or, where appropriate, write your answer in the blank provided.

Gender: 1 - Female 2 - Male

Class: 1 - Freshman 2 - Sophomore 3 - Junior 4 - Senior 5 - Other

Residence: 1 - Coed on-campus 2 - Single-sex on-campus 3 - Fraternity/sorority
4 - At home with family 5 - Other off-campus

Major: _____

1. To what extent have you experienced the following at your school?

Very much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at all 9 - NO EXPERIENCE

Stimulating courses	1	2	3	4	5	9
Good academic counseling	1	2	3	4	5	9
Good psychological counseling	1	2	3	4	5	9
Severe academic competition	1	2	3	4	5	9
Interesting things for you to do *on* campus	1	2	3	4	5	9
Interesting things for you to do *off* campus	1	2	3	4	5	9
Good social relations with other students	1	2	3	4	5	9
Rules and regulations that are really enforced	1	2	3	4	5	9
An attractive physical environment	1	2	3	4	5	9
A pleasant life in your residence	1	2	3	4	5	9
Professors who really care	1	2	3	4	5	9
Administrators who really care	1	2	3	4	5	9
Friendly secretaries and clerks	1	2	3	4	5	9
Adequate safety features such as lighting, locks, telephones	1	2	3	4	5	9
An effective campus police insuring students' safety	1	2	3	4	5	9
Other _____	1	2	3	4	5	9

2. How serious a problem do you think human destructiveness (vandalism, thefts, violent acts against persons, etc.) is at your school?

Very serious problem 1 2 3 4 5 Not a problem 9 - DON'T KNOW

3. Which of the following best sums up your general feelings about how to deal with students who are caught committing serious destructive acts:

I think that students who are caught committing serious destructive acts should be *(please circle only one answer)*

1 - Advised to seek out some kind of counseling or therapy
2 - Required to make restitution (repair damaged property or pay for it, etc.)
3 - Punished (e.g., suspended, expelled, arrested)

4. Do you have personal knowledge (direct observation or reliable reports, not rumors, newspaper accounts, etc.) of any of the following acts being committed at your school within the last two years?

	Yes Frequently	*Yes Occasionally*	*No*
Theft of campus property worth more than $50	1	2	3
Theft of campus property worth less than $50	1	2	3
Destruction of campus property	1	2	3
Graffiti	1	2	3
Destruction of students' property	1	2	3
Theft of students' property	1	2	3
Physical attacks on students	1	2	3
Fighting among students	1	2	3
Students verbally abusing each other	1	2	3
Inconsiderateness among students (invasion of privacy, neglect of fellow students' feelings, personal needs, etc.)	1	2	3
Sexist comments, jokes, gestures	1	2	3
Sexual exploitation	1	2	3
Rape	1	2	3
Cheating on exams and papers	1	2	3
Deliberate interference in fellow students' studies (spoiling lab experiments, stealing library books, etc.)	1	2	3
Other _____	1	2	3

5. Which of the above acts have you yourself engaged in within the last two years? _____

_____

6. Have you been a victim of any of the acts listed above within the last two years? 1 - Yes 2 - No

If Yes, which? _____

7. Have you personally ever done anything to stop acts of the sort listed in Question 5? 1 - Yes 2 - No

If yes, what have you done? _____

If No, why not? _____

8. If you saw someone engaging in destructive behavior what do you think your reaction would be? I would *(please circle all that apply)*

1 - Report the *offender* to campus authorities
2 - Report the *act* to campus authorities
3 - Try to get the offender to stop by talking with him/her
4 - Threaten the offender physically or verbally to try to stop him/her
5 - Get other people to help stop the offender
6 - Do nothing
7 - Do something else I would _____

9. On your campus, did acts of destructiveness *known to you* **occur?**

	Yes	No		Yes	No
On weekdays	1	2	Around midterms and final exams	1	2
On weekends	1	2	Throughout the term	1	2
During the day	1	2	In residence halls	1	2
In the evening	1	2	In the student union	1	2
After midnight	1	2	In classrooms	1	2
After sports events	1	2	In administrative buildings	1	2
After other campus activities	1	2	Throughout the entire campus	1	2

Other _____

10. On the basis of your personal oberservations or reliable evidence, who do you think is responsible for much of the destructiveness occurring at your school? *(please check all that apply)*

_____ Male students
_____ Female students
_____ First-year students
_____ Upper-class students
_____ Residence hall students
_____ Commuter students
_____ Students acting alone
_____ Students in groups
_____ Students with academic problems
_____ Students with personal problems
_____ Students under the influence of alcohol or drugs
_____ Students in fraternities or sororities
_____ High school students
_____ Others who are not college students
_____ Other_____

11. Why do students *known to you* **commit acts of destructiveness (vandalism, theft, acts against persons, etc.)?** *(please check all that apply)*

_____ They are expressing frustration and anger
_____ It is their way of striking out at the institution
_____ They have emotional problems
_____ They are under severe academic pressure
_____ They are under severe social pressure
_____ They are under the influence of alcohol or drugs
_____ They think it is fun
_____ It eases boredom
_____ They are immature
_____ They are pressured by friends to participate
_____ They are trying to get attention or impress others
_____ They are not aware that their actions hurt others
_____ They don't think it is wrong
_____ Other_____

12. How much do you think the following would help decrease destructiveness at your school?

Very much 1 2 3 4 5 Not at all *9 - WOULD MAKE THINGS WORSE*

More activity on the part of campus police 1 2 3 4 5 9
More or better physical prevention (locks, lighting, telephones) 1 2 3 4 5 9
Stronger enforcement of existing rules 1 2 3 4 5 9
Better maintenance or improvement of campus buildings 1 2 3 4 5 9
More student activities or recreational facilities on campus 1 2 3 4 5 9
More student services (to help with academic or psychological problems) 1 2 3 4 5 9
More student involvement in preventing destruction 1 2 3 4 5 9
A happier campus atmosphere 1 2 3 4 5 9

What else do you think would help? _____

_____

13. Do you think that student destructiveness is justified?

1 - Yes, it is *often* justified
2 - Yes, it is *sometimes* justified
3 - Yes, but it is only *rarely* justified
4 - No, it is *never* justified

Under what circumstances do you think student destructiveness is justified?

14. Do you think that academic dishonesty is justified?

1 - Yes, it is *often* justified
2 - Yes, it is *sometimes* justified
3 - Yes, but it is only *rarely* justified
4 - No, it is *never* justified

Under what circumstances do you think academic dishonesty is justified?

Please feel free to make any other comments you wish below.

THANK YOU!

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